Investigation of Aldous Huxley's religious ideas

James D. Mitchell

The University of Montana

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AN INVESTIGATION

of

ALDOUS HUXLEY'S RELIGIOUS IDEAS

by

James D. Mitchell

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Approved:

Edmund L. Pleasant

Chairman of Board of Examiners

W. E. Bateaux

Chairman of Committee on Graduate Study
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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this investigation is to determine as completely and accurately as possible just what religious ideas and preferences Aldous Huxley may have. All Huxley's writings have been studied and the religious ideas contained therein have been developed in this treatise. His works giving best expression to his religious thought are Ends and Means, After Many a Summer Dies the Swan, Eyeless in Gaza, Point Counter Point, Do What You Will, "The Problem of Faith," Harper's Monthly, vol. 166 (Jan., 1933), and "One God or Many?" Harper's Monthly, vol. 159 (Sept., 1929). Although any changes in Huxley's religious thought throughout the years of his writing have been indicated in this paper, essentially his religious ideas of late years are the same as they were in the early years of this twentieth century. Consequently, a chronological development of Huxley's religious thought has not been emphasized over the development of the nature of that thought. An effort has been made to determine where and how that religious thought is currently bent.

The name Huxley, made famous in the scientific field, through the ingenious efforts of Thomas Henry Huxley and Julian Huxley, is also famous in the literary field through
the efforts of novelist Aldous Huxley who is a grandson of Thomas Henry Huxley, and a brother of Julian. Unlike his brother and his grandfather, Aldous does not probe humanity for scientific data. Like his brother and grandfather, however, novelist Huxley has the betterment of humanity as his aim. In fact, all Huxley's religious thought springs from his deep concern over the welfare of humanity, and the bent of his religious thought is toward furthering the temporal welfare of humanity.

Pointedly satirical, definitely iconoclastic, and keenly expressive, Huxley denounces conventional creeds and hypocrisies which he considers inanities of humanity. He would reject all religious thought which interferes with the practice of charity and true fellowship while he would retain and substitute religious beliefs and practices which further good fellowship. In his religious thought Huxley is definitely utilitarian.

In developing Huxley's religious ideas, a definite plan is used whereby; first, his notions of God (the basis of religion) are treated; secondly, his criticism of religion in general is investigated (including his negative opinions of conventional creeds); thirdly, his specific criticism of Christianity, the dominant Occidental creed, is surveyed. And since his main concern in Christianity seems to be Catholicism, special emphasis is laid on his
view of the Roman creed; fourthly, his parethical practices are investigated; fifthly, a study is made of his own creed, with emphasis on his positive ideas; finally, Huxley's negative and positive ideas are related in a chapter devoted to his search for Truth.

In the scope of this investigation the opinions of many who have written about Huxley are not cited. An effort is made to record Huxley's own thoughts, so that opinion and prejudice may be eliminated in the determination of his religious thoughts.

Due to the fact that Huxley still lives, this investigation of his religious opinions has had of necessity to be tentative. In fact, it is likely that in future years he will add to or detract from his present convictions. For the present, however, the ideas in this treatise are the ideas of Huxley as they are today.
CHAPTER I

Huxley’s Ideas of God; His Notions of Pantheism

Among several important facts to be noted regarding Huxley’s theistic beliefs, one of the most important is that he is not atheistic. He has an idea of God, however strange and mysterious his deity may seem. Huxley feels that God may still exist in the universe, regardless of how men may choose to view the deity, a belief which is substantiated in Jesting Pilate:

...The fact that men have stupid and obviously incorrect ideas about God does not justify us in trying to eliminate God from out of the universe. 1

The first thing that can be said for certain regarding Huxley’s notion of God is that his idea of the deity is not in conformity with conventional notions of God. Although Huxley does profess belief in a God, he does not restrict himself to stating that God is one or many:

...there is no conceivable method of demonstrating that God is either one or many. So far as human beings are concerned he is both; monotheism and polytheism are equally true. 2

1 Jesting Pilate, p. 219
2 "One God or Many?", Harper's Monthly, (Sept., 1929) v. 156 p. 407
Huxley himself prefers belief in many Gods, but he does not restrict himself to polytheism. His opinion that "...the new Religion will have to have many Gods" was spoken in 1929, and it might be said that he shows a decided preference for polytheism throughout all the early years of his writing. However eclectic in his views, Huxley did not set polytheism up as objectively true, for he modifies his 1929 view by making the following statement in *Ends and Means* in 1936:

...charity cannot progress towards universality unless the prevailing cosmology is either monotheistic or pantheistic.

Huxley does not bind himself to restricted belief in the nature of God as one or many, nor does he say that man ought to have any set idea of God. Rather, he avers that man ought to form his own idea of God, and for some God may even be a "sensation in the pit of the stomach, hypostasized." Huxley later modified this subjective notion of God by insisting that society should avoid considering God as a person.

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3 "One God or Many?", *Harper's Monthly* (Sept., 1929) v. 156 p. 410
4 *Ends and Means*, p. 8
5 *Jesting Pilate*, p. 26
He feels that the tendency of society to personify the deity and "to make God after man's own image" is erroneous. Huxley believes that Browning and others developed their idea of a personal God by just such ratioception.

Huxley believes that people erroneously allow their idea of God to assume strange shapes, even evil shapes, such as a blood-thirsty State or a carnivorous sun. Further modifying the validity of a subjective notion of God, Huxley rejects Nationalism which considers God and the State to be one:

...to believe that the nation is God is a mistake as grotesque as was the mistake of supposing that the sun would die if it did not get victims or that God is a kind of large invisible man, with all the most disgraceful human passions.

There is little doubt that monotheism is the prevalent belief in Western society. Huxley believes the prevalence of that belief is due more to fashion than reason:

...why not in sixty-four Gods, or two hundred and seventeen Gods? Because monotheism is fashionable in twentieth-century Europe. Mr. Jones believes in one God, because Mr. Smith believes in one God, and incidentally because a good many centuries ago Plato and numerous Jews, including Jesus, believed in one God.10

8 *Jesting Pilate*, p. 219
7 *loc. cit.
8 *Ends and Means*, p. 109
10 "One God or Many?", *Op. cit.*, p. 401
Huxley believing that polytheism ruled the world before the time of Christ, discounts a notion of God formed on standards of fashion.

Huxley's concept of God as one and many may seem confusing; for it would appear that for something to be both one and many is a metaphysical contradiction. However, it is well to keep in mind that Huxley does not claim that God exists as a singular and plural entity at one and the same time; rather, Huxley believes that God is one or many only as He is viewed in the mind. The key to Huxley's notion of God rests in the fact that life is extremely diverse, and in the diversity of life one may see God as many different entities—even a sensation in the pit of the stomach. The important point about Huxley's notions of God is that he believes the psychological states of the mind are the standards on which one may rely for a true notion of God.

Huxley's concepts of God are not in conformity with Christian notions of the deity, except, insofar as Huxley believes that the individual may have a good understanding of God. Huxley believes that Christians, especially, are guilty of making God after their own image:

Of those few who look for God, most find, through ignorance, only such reflections of their own self-will as the God of battles, the God of the chosen people, the Prayer-Answerer, the Saviour.\footnote{"One God or Many?" \textit{Op. cit.}, p. 398} \footnote{\textit{Ends and Means}, p. 266}
Huxley does not believe that one should make God be what one would have Him be, but rather should consider Him as a power solely for good. Huxley holds the opinion that Christians do not consider God as such a power for good; he believes that Christians have so distorted the idea of God that they now worship nothing:

Christianity has gone from polytheism to monotheism and from monotheism to the worship of an abstraction, from the worship of an abstraction to the worship of nothing at all. 13

Huxley has always considered it a fault for society to permit its imagination to run wild on matters of the deity. His criticism springs from his detestation of emphasizing wishful thinking over reality.

Two important philosophical beliefs which have always been prevalent among men, and which have always had religious implications, are spiritualism and materialism. Both beliefs maintain essentially the monism of all substance. Spiritualism maintains that everything is soul or spirit and all things are parts of one spiritual substance commonly known as God. Materialism denies the existence of anything spiritual and maintains that everything is concrete matter, and this matter is unified God. Both beliefs eliminate the duality of substance; hence, everyone is God, and everyone has an equal right to set up his or her own standard of morality.

13 "One God or Many?", Op. cit., p. 402
For the spiritualistic or materialistic pantheist there can be no other life apart from this present one. Hence, standards of religious action based on belief in another life are foreign to the spiritualist or materialist.

Huxley is neither a spiritualistic nor materialistic pantheist. In fact, he is aware of the diversity of reality of the world, and is not a monist. Huxley's idea of what God should be--Life itself--demonstrates Huxley's notion of the duality of matter. He advises humanity to be aware of the diversity of Life, or God, and humanity could not be aware of that diversity if humanity and life were one.

In *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan* Huxley speaks of the difference between the spiritual level, the animal level and the human level; hence he does not believe that everything is either spiritual or material--there is plurality. Huxley makes this belief in the duality of substance even clearer in his statement that "God is a power withdrawn 15 from creatures." Huxley clearly expresses his opinion of the pantheism of William Wordsworth:

14 *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan*, pp. 135-6
A voyage through the topics would have cured him of his too easy and comfortable pantheism. A few months in the jungle would have convinced him that the diversity and utter strangeness of Nature are at least as real and significant as its intellectually discovered unity. Nor would he have felt so certain, in the deep and stifling darkness, among the leeches and the meleoeely tangled rattans, of the divinely Anglican character of that fundamental unity.

Again, Huxley in his detestation of Nationalism, which is a materialistic philosophy, doesn't fully countenance materialism.

Although Huxley makes it clear that he himself believes God a creature withdrawn from the universe, he does not openly condemn pantheism. Pantheism may appear reasonable to many persons, and the psychological states may even dictate the truth of pantheism to certain individuals. This inference may be construed from Huxley's belief regarding the subjectivity of truth:

...The truth—the inward truth I mean, since that is the only truth we can know— is that God is different for different men and for the same men on different occasions.

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16 "Wordsworth in the Tropics", Yale Review, (June, 1929) v. 18, p. 683
17 "One God or Many?", op. cit. p. 406
CHAPTER II

Huxley’s Ideas on Conventional Creeds and Modern Religious Practices

It has been seen that there is a wide difference between Huxley’s notion of God and conventional notions of the deity. And just as Huxley is adverse to accepting conventional beliefs in God, so is he adverse to accepting other conventional religious ideas. Huxley believes the creeds of his fellow men lead to hypocrisy, and he derides outstanding religious beliefs which most encourage hypocrisy. Huxley feels that Christianity has encouraged man to love the lowest aspects of human life instead of the highest good which should be one’s aim:

...The chief result of the preaching of Christian spirituality and of its later substitute, scientific intellectualism, is that men now instinctively and enthusiastically love the lowest when they see it.\(^1\)

Huxley’s main criticism of Western creeds and Western peoples is that they are too irrational. He does not regard those who profess beliefs in what he considers erratic creeds as idiots or imbeciles. Rather, he feels that those people are rational by nature, but irrational by choice. Huxley considers the

\(^1\) "One God or Many?", Harper’s Monthly, vol. 159 (Sept., 1929) p. 409
people of modern times as people swayed by their emotions and feelings rather than by their reason. And it is at just such emotional beliefs and emotional externals that Huxley inveighs. Huxley does not agree that man should merely be an agnostic, one ignorant of God or Truth; rather, he attacks just such lethargic attitudes which promote such a conviction. One may be mistaken about one's creeds and religious ideas, but one should seek to correct those mistakes, using reason as a searchlight.

The most important factor in religion is faith. For example, one must have faith in the existence of God. Likewise, Christians must accept the revelation of Christ on the faith of those historians who have recorded His revelation. Mystics must have faith in the presence of the deity with whom they seek communion. The difference between a religious concept based on faith and a religious concept based on reason is that the latter can be demonstrated to the mind by inductions and deductions which prove the concept, whereas a concept based on faith is accepted by the individual although it cannot be proven.

Huxley does not reject faith as an unreasonable religious factor. Rather, he feels that faith is very often necessary in testing scientific and religious truth.

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2 Ends and Means, p. 330
His main criticism of modern religious faith is based on his conviction that faith is used blindly and irrationally. He has the following statement to make regarding man's use of faith:

...The appeal to reason has always been without general response. It has, therefore, been necessary to invent non-rational motives for the compassing of the most supremely reasonable ends. Hence mythologies and religions, hence posthumous rewards and punishments, hence gods, devils, ghosts.

Huxley acknowledges the fact that reason is not able to answer all things to man's satisfaction, and he regards the resort to faith as natural, but of necessity, limited. He disparages emotional belief which encourages self-glorification and identification with some extra-mundane noumenon. Such faith to Huxley is most unreasonable.

In an attempt to show that faith is misdirected, Huxley criticizes the fallacy of arguing from thought to reality:

On very little evidence, but with no qualms of intellectual conscience, we assume that our craving for explanation has a real object in an explicable universe, that the aesthetic satisfaction we derive from certain arguments is a sign that they are true, that the laws of thought are also the laws of things.

Such wishful thinking accounts for the misdirection of natural faith, an escape from reality because of aesthetic sensations.

3 "One God or Many?", op. cit., p. 398
4 Ends and Means, p. 330
Conventional faith also impedes enlightenment, particularly helpful enlightenment. Huxley is consistent in criticizing any practice that narrows participation in life. He believes that conventional faith, admitting abnegation and spiritual retreat, is a distinct barrier to the flow of enlightenment.

From the evidence of Huxley's opinions on faith, one can readily see that he would have society abandon its present faith, or at least rid itself of the emotion connected with conventional faith. He disparages the emotional belief which supports an idea of self-glorification and identification with some extra-mundane noumenon. Such faith, he avers, is swayed by emotion rather than reason:

...intelligence cannot function properly where it is too often or too violently interfered with by the emotions, impulses and emotionally charged sensations."

Huxley believes that if modern faith is stripped of its emotional qualities it can serve a good purpose. He best expresses his attitude in these words, "Final conviction can come only to those who make an act of faith."

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5 loc. cit.
6 Ibid., pp. 260-5
7 "One God or Many?", op. cit., p. 400
8 Ends and Means, p. 330
One of the important practices in conventional religion is mysticism, that practice wherein the mystic seeks spiritual union with the deity. Huxley believes mysticism and those who practice it commendable providing there is sincerity in the mystic.

Of all the Christian practices, Huxley finds mysticism most interesting. He does not approve of Christian mysticism, however, since it does not have Life as the supreme deity. Huxley seems to agree with Ruysbroeck as to what the ideal mystical state is; namely, that state where, "God in the depths of us receives God who comes to us; it is God contemplating God."

Huxley recognizes the use of meditation to achieve the desired union between the deity and the mystic, and he approves of contemplation which transcends consciousness:

...Properly practised, with due preparation, physical, mental and moral, meditation may result in a state of what has been called 'transcendental consciousness'—the direct intuition of, and union with, the ultimate spiritual reality...beyond the self...10

In addition, Huxley maintains that through meditation mystics can have intuitions not common to the ordinary man:

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9 *E incons and Means*, p. 332
10 *loc. cit.*
...A man who has trained himself in goodness comes
to have certain direct intuitions about character...
intuitions quite different from intuitions of...
sensual men.\footnote{Ends and Means, p. 333}

Needless to say, Huxley is not thinking of the
hypocritical mystic who fails to achieve the true re-
lationship between God and himself.

The tendency to regard God as a person is a
stumbling block to successful meditation, an impediment,
according to Huxley, more common to the Christian than
to the Hindu. Huxley approves of Christian mysticism
if a \textit{complete} state of transcendence is attained; a
state wherein the irrational idea of a personal God is
omitted. Huxley believes that the mystic must success-
fully dismiss any thoughts of self or a God modeled after
the self.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 347}

Huxley prefers meditation entirely free from
emotional disturbances. Perhaps it is not too difficult
to understand his disapproval of conventional religion
since the latter often lays emphasis on emotional dis-
turbances.

The basis for Huxley's approval of mysticism lies
in the fact that the practice of mysticism aids one in
detaching oneself from worldly cravings. He does not
believe that either the Christian or Buddhist attains the true state of non-attachment, however, for the Christian and the Buddhist project their ego into their mystical experiences.

Huxley's criticism of Catholic mysticism is that it brings about a sad-faced outlook on life and a religious melancholy that should be avoided. In reference to the famous "Holy Face of Lucca," Huxley believes that peasants who for centuries have bowed in veneration of the relic, have narrowed themselves ridiculously.

There is, however, a similarity of purpose between Catholic mysticism and the mysticism of which Huxley approves; namely, that of elevation to a spiritual level through meditation. The difference between Huxley and the Catholic mystic is in their respective concepts of the spiritual level. Huxley approves of elevating oneself to such a level, but he believes one should be constantly aware of the diversity of life, i.e., never lose sight of reality. On the other hand, the Catholic mystic believes in complete elevation to the spiritual level—even to the exclusion of awareness of materiality. Although Catholics are fully aware that they have a duty toward their fellow-man and society in general, still,

13 "Holy Face of Lucca", Century (Feb. 1929) v. 117 pp. 490-23
while meditating, Catholics attempt to devote absolute attention to God, the object or Being with whom they seek identification while meditating.

Both Huxley and the Catholic agree that the present society is rapidly becoming godless, and both likewise agree that the time has come for spiritual contemplation of and refuge in a Supreme Being. Both consider the welfare of society as something to be attained. As long as Catholic mystics seek communion with God in the effort to plead with Him for that welfare, Huxley approves of their mysticism, but as long as the Catholic mystic seeks self-satisfaction only, Huxley disapproves. In any event, Huxley has wise advice for those inclined to reject meditation as insanity:

...But it should be remembered that to those who have never actually had it (mystical experience), any direct intuition must seem subjective and illusory. It is impossible for the deaf to form any idea of the nature or significance of music.14

Holding the interest of humanity at heart, Huxley finds Christianity and most of its practices lacking as far as promoting the welfare of humanity is concerned. The aim of his creed is to promote the welfare of humanity, and a selfish Christianity which worships a personal God while it ignores the sufferings of humanity, is sadly lacking:15

14 *Ends and Means*, p. 332
15 *After Many a Summer Dies the Sun*, p. 109
...But if there is no single inspired book, no uniquely holy church, no meditating priesthood nor sacramental magic; if there is no personal God to be placated into forgiving offenses; if there are, even in the moral world, only causes and effects and the enormous complexity of inter-relationships—then clearly, the task of telling people what to do about their shortcomings is much more difficult...So that even intelligence is not sufficient as an adjunct to good will; there must also be the recollection which seeks to transform and transcend intelligence. Many are called, but few are chosen—because few even know in what salvation consists.16

Huxley believes conventional society is addicted to a craving for selfish interests—even to such an extent that the necessities of their fellow men are disregarded.

Huxley not only criticizes the selfish rich as exemplified by Stoyte in After Many a Summer Dies the Swan, but he also criticizes the involuntary poor who find consolation in a God and a creed that do not alleviate their misery. Propter points out that,

...Unfortunate people, in part at any rate, they were pretty certainly responsible for their own misfortunes...For what hope, he asked himself (Propter) is there for a man who really believes that 'they hated me without a cause'.17

Huxley expresses a hope that conventional society will

16 loc. cit.
17 ibid. pp. 106-7
awake from its lethargy and adopt a religion of good deeds rather than empty words and feelings. Speaking of society he says,

You can't preserve them from collective madness and suicide if they persist in paying divine honours to ideals which are merely projections of their own personalities—in other words, if they persist in worshipping themselves rather than God.18

To Huxley's mind, both those who suffer and those who deal out the suffering project themselves too much into their religious ideals; hence, those ideals are meaningless.

Unless man rejects his love of time and his selfish cravings, Huxley sees no salvation for humanity. True religion should keep that salvation in mind, and the only way that salvation can be achieved is by non-attachment to selfish and deceitful cravings. It may be said that his whole criticism of Christians springs from what he considers to be a fact that they have too many impediments in their religion to affect the desired non-attachment which they should have:

...the inhabitants of every civilized country are menaced; all desire passionately to be saved from impending disaster; the overwhelming majority refuse to change the habits of thought, feeling and action which are directly responsible for their present plight.19

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18 After Many a Summer Dies the Swan, p. 171
19 loc. cit.
Huxley clearly brings out what he means by the Christians failing to achieve non-attachment in the example of Stoyte who is completely unaware of his unfortunate orange pickers while at the same time he aesthetically and emotionally proclaims that, "God is Love." If Christianity is to fit in with Huxley's notion of a satisfactory creed it must achieve a "liberation from time, liberation from craving and revulsion, liberation from personality," all of which conventional religion fails to accomplish.

Huxley criticizes the Christian idea of trying to fit life into a preconceived way of living. As long as Christians do that, they can never attain anything good.

The Christian forms a preconceived way of living from his monotheistic beliefs, i.e., he places emphasis on the spiritual over the material and disregards reality. For Huxley, an attempt to live up to such a preconceived way of living ends in disillusionment and very often deceit.

Huxley views the deceitful preconceived way of living as typical of Christians who sanction war and slaughter on one hand while they advocate goodness on the other:

After Many a Summer Dies the Swan, p. 40
ibid., p. 123
...Here is a 'religious sentiment which feels itself deeply offended if flying machines settle on a certain hallowed sheet of water, Sea of Galilee, but which (to judge the published utterances of Anglican deans and bishops) does not find anything shocking in the thought that these same flying machines...drop fire, poison and... explosives'.

Again, Martha's complete disregard of her family in The Claxton's is a distinct evil even though she aspires to good in her preconceived way of living ascetically. Huxley considers such aspirations insane.

Another criticism of Christian society which Huxley offers is that Christian society has become entirely too mechanized. That is, since the Christian worships the spiritual and ignores the material, he has been entirely unprepared to meet the advance of a material, mechanized society, and so the Christian has become a slave to machinery. "Christianity has left him without a defense against our mechanized civilization." Huxley averts that society has found no evil in the machine, and so has accepted it passively. Although man has sought to live a higher life he has sunk lower into the Gaderene pit—he ignores the welfare

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Ends and Means, p. 286

24 "One God or Many?", op. cit, p. 410
of humanity. Moreover, Christianity, in setting up wealth, power and pleasure as new ideals, has dropped into lethargic complacency, incapable of producing good. Huxley believes that Christianity has taught man to live superhumanly, turned against life:

...Turned against life, they have worshipped Death in the form of spirituality and intellectualism.26

Huxley sees Christianity as a slave to mechanized evils because Christianity, he avers, is a slave to its own spiritual notions. As a result, Huxley believes, Christianity is slowly decaying while it makes no attempt to impede such decay:

By exhorting men to lead the 'higher life' Christianity and its philosophical successors have condemned men to an existence insoomperably lower than the 'low life' against which they have always fulminated.27

Huxley believes that Christianity has in a large measure been responsible for the condition of modern society, and he sees only a new and different creed as a help to arousing society from its coma.

Huxley does not condemn Christ himself, but rather the followers of Christ who have distorted his teachings, and those who have brought about a society which abounds in false gods and indifferent humans.

25 "One God or Many?", op. cit., p. 410
26 loc. cit.
27 loc. cit.
28 ibid., p. 409
Huxley sees as another fault with Christianity the way in which the life-blood of the old polytheistic religion has been poisoned with Christian antedates. He looks upon Christianity as a creed that received fundamental dogmas from its forerunner, polytheism. Christianity, in turn, sifted polytheism and evolved a unified God that contained within Him several Gods. Speaking of this sifting, Huxley says, "Christianity could not destroy the old Adam; it merely perverted him and made him disgusting." Huxley does not think Christianity rejected belief in many gods. He believes that the Christian reinforced his own creed with polytheistic parts. For example, Huxley considers Catholic saints, lady deities (such as the Virgin Mary) as minor Gods, "monotonously alike in quality—all are good."

Huxley's concept of Christ, the founder of Christianity, is different from the Christian's concept of Christ. Huxley believes Christ to have been a man, but he does not consider Christ as being God. The Christian looks upon Christ as having been both God and man. Huxley realizes that the Christian has faith in the teaching that Christ was both human and divine, and since reason

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29 "One God or Many?", op. cit., p. 403
30 loc. cit.
31 loc. cit.
cannot disprove faith, Huxley does not attempt to overthrow the Christian belief regarding Christ's nature. The Christian, believing that Christ is God, believes what He taught was right, and Christ taught that asceticism was right. In fact, Christ himself was an ascetic. However, Huxley does not believe asceticism meritorious, nor does he accept Christ as God. The difference between Huxley and the Christian as to their notions of Christ's nature is a difference in belief, and Huxley does not attempt to overthrow the Christian's belief. He does not concern himself with the nature of Christ; he attacks the practices of Christians.

Huxley, as pointed out, has always been interested in the welfare of society, and it may be said that his religion is based upon achieving that welfare. He believes that Christianity fails to hold together the pattern of society, and so disregards the welfare of that society. Going back a few years, one finds a clear expression of Huxley's opinions on Christian practicality in Point Counter Point where he compares his ideal character, Rampion, with Christians:

...Rampion...proceeds to make his way of living fit the facts, and doesn't try to complete the facts to fit in with a preconceived idea of the right way of
living (like these imbecile Christians and intellectuals and moralists and efficient business men.)

Though Huxley is hopeful that a Christian society will wake up to the fact that they fail to hold together this pattern, he can see no awakening to that fact as long as Christianity maintains its conventional creeds, and refuses to escape the level of lethargy. To Huxley's mind, Christians must make an effort to reform themselves. They must make an effort to abandon emotional desire and unreserved devotion to Christianity alone.

Huxley criticizes the fact that even Christianity does not have complete unity of opinion. He criticizes the fact that they have different beliefs, different rituals and different standards of morality. Moreover, he does not merely regard it as a difference in faith, since many Christians despise one another, overlooking the fact that they adore a common Christ. Huxley believes that since Christians cannot even agree on the adoration of Christ they can be little expected to agree on anything. Despite the fact that Christ, in presenting his two great commandments, one of which was the command

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32 Point Counter Point, p. 378
33 ibid., pp. 379-80 ff.
to love one's neighbor, definitely condemns hate and
dissention. Christians will seek justification for
murder and hate. In that they destroy the pattern of
Christianity. Many Christians work against themselves,
rationalizing, through emotional craving, the justice
of hate, seemingly unaware that one cannot love one's
neighbor, yet hate him.

Huxley believes that Christ was a man who avoided
the arts of philosophy, science and sex. Huxley main-
tains that perhaps Christ's biographers had much to do
with conveying the wrong idea as to Christ's life;
nevertheless, the Christ of revelation lacks the per-
fection and fullness of living. Likewise, persons who
imitate the life of Christ lack the necessary fullness
of living.

The sincere Christian endeavors as much as possible
to imitate the life of Jesus whom, as has been shown,
Christians consider as God, for the Christian, in be-
lieving that Christ's teachings are the means of sal-
vation, sees perfection in living a life modeled after
Christ's life. Huxley does not approve of devoting one's
life to imitating Jesus:

34 The teaching of Christ throughout the New Testament
extols love of one's neighbor.

35 Ends and Means, p. 275
Scrupulous devotion to end imitation of the person of Jesus have resulted only too frequently in the total tendency, on the part of earnest Christians, to despise artistic creation...to dispereage the inquiring intelligence...and to believe themselves justified in displaying anger, or as they would doubtless prefer to call it, 'righteous indignation.'

Huxley feels that modern religion just doesn't fit society, and since "...men work for ends which are wholly irrational and bad," their creeds must be at fault. Though Huxley admits that religion often aids man to work out good ends, he believes that the decay and instability of religion defeat its purpose. He feels that the supernatural fulcrums of Western creeds have begun to decay, and as a result naturalistic fulcrums, equally unstable, are being adopted:

"...The supernatural fulcrum, by the aid of which our ancestors moved their world, has become so rickety that it will no longer support the levers of our imagination. But as men cannot dispense with faith, they have set up new fulcrums—not outside the world this time, but on it. Even in matters of faith, supernaturalism has given place to naturalism."

Huxley's criticism of modern religions are revealed in his novels and short stories, as well as in his articles.

36 Ends and Means, p. 296
37 "The Problem of Faith," op. cit., p. 212
38 ibid., pp. 212-3
His novels especially satirize characters who hypocritically and insanely believe in goodness, yet practice badness. The classic example of religious hypocrisy is Carling, a character in *Point Counter Point*. Whenever this character is introduced as a reprobate in the guise of a saint, Huxlian satire is never more bitter, and whatever Carling's actions may be, one feels that he is a hypocritical puppet dangling satirically from the author's pen. While Carling may extol and pile encomiums upon the saints in one line, in another he reells forth as his true disgusting self. Aiming his darts at the target of religious deceit, Huxley is an accurate archer. Again, Virginia and Stoyte in *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan*, are ludicrously drawn in their impious religious garb. Virginia prays with moronic sincerity, yet has weak moral resistance; Stoyte avows that "God is Love," while he hates with vehemence. Through the medium of these deceitful religious characters, Huxley points out the insanities of flimsy modern beliefs.

The end of modern religious belief is identification with God, an ultimate unity between the adorer and the adored. To the Christian the attainment of this unity is the happiness which he seeks. Huxley believes the Christian errs in seeking an identification with a deity outside this world. Huxley also seeks identification
with the highest Good, but to his mind that highest Good is to be found right here in this world. He does not believe there is any other heaven, but the heaven in this material universe. Huxley considers it folly to seek a happiness in a future life, and his writings bring out the belief that those who seek a happiness in another world find nothing but unhappiness in this life. Happiness can be found, Huxley believes, in promoting the welfare of one's neighbor.

Huxley does not discount modern religious ideas because they are religious. He discounts those ideas because they are unsuited to life. Propter, in *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan*, is a religious figure, and his religious ideas are supported by Huxley who believes those ideas practical. Nor does Propter ever become hypocritical. His sincerity pervades. G. K. Chesterton and others have attacked Huxley because of what seems to them an inability on Huxley's part to bind religion to happiness. Undoubtedly, Huxley often seems to carry his distrust of modern religion too far, for there are religious persons who happily practice many of the ideas which Huxley denounces. If Huxley does not know of such persons, an adequate answer may be found in his own words:
...Most ignorance is vincible ignorance. We don't know because we don't want to know. It is our will that determines how and upon what subjects we shall use our intelligence. Those who detect no meaning in the world generally do so because for one reason or another, it suits their own ideas that the world should be meaningless.

Huxley's disinclination for Christianity, as indicated in the earliest years of his writing, and as still displayed in his latest years, springs from his belief that Christianity sets up a way of life which is superhuman. His aversion was openly expressed in 1929:

...There is no possibility of anyone realizing Christian ideals. For human beings, simply cannot, in the nature of things, be superhuman...Those who take the Christian ideal seriously are compelled incessantly to commit a partial suicide. Luckily, the majority of nominal Christians has at no time taken the Christian ideal very seriously; if it had, the races and the civilization of the West would long ago have come to an end.

In his treatment of Christians, Huxley invariably portrays them as incapable of being superhuman, with the result that they endeavor to make the superhuman elements of their creed selfishly human.

Huxley agrees with Christian teachings insofar as those teachings may fit his own definition of what religion should be:

...Religion is, among many other things, a system of education, by means of which human beings may

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39 Ends and Means, p. 312
40 "One God or Many?", op. cit., p. 402
train themselves, first to make desirable changes in their own personalities in society, and at one remove in the second place, to heighten consciousness and so establish more adequate relations between themselves and the universe of which they are parts. 41

41

Ends and Means, p. 260
CHAPTER III

Huxley's Ideas on Catholicism

Throughout his years of writing Huxley has shown much concern over Catholicism and the tenets of that creed. Since Catholicism stands out in its rejection of the material, in its notions of sin, asceticism, adoration of God, praying to saints, practice of meditation and other emotional practices, Huxley has attempted to evaluate those notions in the light of their aid or hindrance to successful living. His concern over Catholic practices has aroused much query as to whether or not he would follow the path of many other intellectuals and join the Roman church.

Many Catholic writers familiar with Huxley look upon him as one having no complaint against Catholicism, some of them actually seeing a possible alignment with Catholic ideas. For example, Theodore Maynard, reviewing Huxley in the Catholic World, offers the following opinion: "...His quarrel with the Catholic Church, such as it is, reposes upon a misunderstanding." ¹

Father Vann, a Jesuit writer, also sees a similarity between Huxley and St. Thomas Aquinas. Maynard bases his

opinion on a statement of Huxley's:

...My only objection to Catholic theology is, not that it is absurd, but that it is not absurd enough. It is realistic up to a point—much more realistic than many of the self-styled modern and scientific philosophies which have risen in its place—but it has not dared to be realistic to the end.

From the above statement it is evident that Huxley believes Catholicism has fallen short in its recognition of life and reality, his old complaint against religion. Despite his objection on this score, one thing is certain—Huxley and the Catholic Church desire man to raise himself to the spiritual level, though they disagree on the means of attaining such a level. Catholicism seeks such elevation through imitation of Christ; Huxley seeks such a level through detachment from emotions and selfish desires.

Huxley, who for the present is opposed to the Catholic Faith on the grounds of its supposed unsuitability to life, may take similar steps to those intellectuals who have joined the Catholic Church, but for the present he identifies himself with no conventional creed.

Though Huxley seems to approve of many of the Catholic practices his general beliefs are contrary to Catholic dogmas. He could not align himself with Catholicism unless he would reject many of his religious notions which are contrary to the teachings of the

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"Aldous Huxley, Moralist", loc. cit., p. 21
Catholic Church.

Actually, many of Huxley's ideas are similar to Catholic ideas. For example, Huxley's ideas on Nationalism, Communism, Meditation, obscene literature, sexual unrestraint, and war are quite in conformity with Catholic ideas on the same subjects. On the other hand, however, the majority of Huxley's religious ideas are not in conformity with Catholic ideas.

Catholicism has always considered asceticism a most important practice because Christ himself was an ascetic. Consequently, the Catholic Church insists on the practice of fasting at certain times of the year, particularly Lent. St. Francis Assisi is considered by Catholics as the outstanding ascetic, and he is highly venerated for his life of spiritual abnegation. Huxley feels differently about St. Francis.

Huxley, believing ascetical practices detrimental to the promotion of human fellowship, sees no benefits in the abnegation of St. Francis. Huxley expresses the view that St. Francis, a successful soldier and debaucher during younger years, did not change when he entered religious life—he merely shifted his desire for glory from one field to another.

3 "Francis and Grigory", Saturday Review of Literature, v. 6 (Oct., 1929) p.291
...He could achieve celebrity and break records in asceticism and self-abasement, and in nothing else. Hence, his admiration for self-abasement and asceticism.4

Comparing St. Francis with Grigory Rasputin, Huxley prefers the latter's theory of "salvation through sin." Rasputin was just the opposite of St. Francis as the former believed man would save himself by unrestraint rather than self-abnegation. Huxley attempts to justify Rasputin's code of action:

A man ought to strive to subdue things to himself—reckoning among 'things' his own body and his own instincts and giving to his conscious will the name of 'self'... But there are also occasions—and this is what the Franciscan, no less the Roman, no less than the Samuel-Smilesian morality refuses to admit—when a man ought to permit himself to be subdued to things. There are occasions when it is right that he should sacrifice his will, his conscious desires to overcome exterior circumstances...there are times when that which is divine in him, the Life, demands this sacrifice.6

Huxley, besides criticizing asceticism on the score that it encourages vainglory, has the following to say regarding the practice of self-denial:

...Mortification of the flesh, in the religious sense of the term, results in a mortification of the soul that is only too distressingly medical—in a spiritual gangrene, a putrefaction, a stink.7

4 loc. cit.
5 ibid., p. 292
6 ibid., p. 290
7 ibid., p. 291
Of all Huxley's works, none gives the full and explicit treatment of asceticism that the article concerning St. Francis and Grigory affords. Underlying Huxley's whole criticism of St. Francis and other ascetics is his belief that one should not deny himself certain aspects of life. And Huxley regards abnegation as a submission of the part to the whole, a voluntary subduing of the essential parts of one's self, which submission can result only in the lethargy which Huxley considers so detrimental to happy living. Huxley confirms this belief in *Eyeless in Gaza.*

Huxley believes that any practice which overlooks the multiplicity of life leads to starving the soul, and such a practice should be avoided. On the other hand, Catholics believe that ascetical meditation fills the soul with God and affords a felling of satisfaction comparable to the feeling a mother derives from sacrifices she makes to help her children. Huxley and the Catholic differ on their respective beliefs in what self-denial accomplishes for the ascetic.

Many ascetics such as St. Francis deny themselves to please God; others, who may also be called ascetics, deny themselves to please themselves. An example of this...

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*Eyeless in Gaza,* p. 470
latter type is Martha, a character in one of Huxley's short stories. Huxley abhors this latter type of ascetic, also. In the story, Martha denies herself and her family any luxuries of food, entertainment, etc. Martha appears ascetical enough, but the insensibleness of her own life and the discontent of her family's life doesn't compensate for her spiritual submission. Martha loses the love of her children, and dooms herself to a melancholy life. Whatever motive the ascetic may have in mind, he or she is looked upon by Huxley in the following light:

...the ascetics go even farther than the philosophers. They starve their souls to death—or, in more orthodox language, detach themselves completely from all earthly things.  

Huxley believes that many ascetics are hypocrites, and he criticizes them severely. Martha is just such a hypocrite. She gorges herself with preferred foods while she denies her family necessities. Again, Huxley believes that Gregory, the monk, could be ascetically inclined because he was well-fed by the peasants. Many Catholics would regard this latter view as biased,

10 "One God or Many?", op. cit., p. 408
11 "Francis and Grigory", op. cit., p. 290
for inadequate biographers may have given the wrong
impression of Gregory. However, whether Gregory was
hypocritical or not, the fact stands that Huxley abhors
deceitful ascetics.

Scoarcely a novel flows from Huxley's pen which does
not satirize asceticism or deceitful ascetics. Asceticism
is treated satirically in all of his novels in which
ascetics appear. In Point Counter Point Huxley's satire
on ascetics is most bitter. For example, animalistic
Lucy Tantamount receives severe criticism, but through
Rampion, Huxley agrees to the view that the ascetic is
one who fornicates hatred of life. Seeking a medium,
Huxley sees only two fruits of asceticism, and both of
them are death. One is the sadistic denial of self; the
other is promiscuity as an excessive reaction.

Although Huxley adequately expresses his opinion of
ascetics in the following statement,

be deplore such visible symptoms of sainthood as
the hair shirt. We do not like a saint to sacrifice,
along with his money and his worldly success, his
clothes, his comfort, his family ties, his marriage-
bed.\(^1\)

still, he does not indulge in the opposite of asceticism
which is excessive promiscuity. In fact, all characters
that display themselves as unrestrained animals are

\(^1\)
Point Counter Point, p. 41
\(^1\)
Jesting Pilate, p. 117
saturizd in his novels. Stoyte in After Many a Summer
*Dies the Swan* is such a character.

Perhaps the most important link holding together
the Catholic Church is its emphasis on obedience. Since
dissent brings about dissolution, Catholicism could
never have survived centuries of persecution without
respect for authority. Within the Catholic Church there
is no room for individualism, since bishops obey the
Pope, priests obey bishops and the laity obeys priests,
bishops and the Pope. Huxley, aware of Catholic obedience
attributes solidarity of such societies as the Jesuits
and the Benedictines to their observance of obedience.
Moreover, he recognizes the degree to which prayer and
education have been extended to achieve Catholic solid-
arity:

...Communities governed on Jesuit principles,
communities governed on Benedictine principles,
communities governed on Quaker principles—all
three types as history has demonstrated, are
capable of surviving.14

But Huxley does not believe the Jesuits or other
Catholic orders could ever achieve the desired non-
attachment. Bound as they are to obedience, the Jesuits,
in Huxley's opinion, do not have freedom of choice, and

14 *Ends and Means*, p. 152
the latter is necessary in bringing about non-attachment. "The Jesuit postulant," he says, "is hidden in so many words to model his behavior on that of a corpse. He is to allow himself to be moved... as though he were a cadaver. Such passive obedience is incompatible with genuine non-attachment." Regardless of Huxley's objection to Catholic societies, he believes them capable of surviving, a belief which leads some to say that he would adopt parts of Jesuit rule to reinforce his New Humanism.

During the Middle Ages, Catholics laid emphasis on the will and soul as means of attaining unity with God; however, since that time, Catholics have placed the emphasis on emotions and exteriors such as sacraments. It is this change which Huxley denounces, believing, as he does, that emotional religion emphasizes the self over God. Huxley believes such emotional religion is bringing about the decay of modern Catholicism. He does not believe Catholicism could survive another persecution.

For the Catholic, the stability of morality is paramount in importance. That is, he believes a thing either right or wrong objectively, despite man's subjective interpretation. For example, to the Catholic, murder is always wrong, for it is an intrinsic evil.

15 *Ends and Means*, p. 153
16 *ibid.*, p. 151
which rationalizing can never justify. In the same way, theft, impurity, slander, and falsehood are objectively wrong and intrinsically illicit. Contrary to this view, Huxley considers morality to be mutable. For him, pre-marital chastity may be either right or wrong, depending on whether it helps or hinders achievement of non-attachment.

Though Huxley disagrees with the Catholic notions of morality, he conforms to many Catholic notions of good, particularly those pertaining to sex. From the evidence of his novels, no author despises sexual excesses more vehemently than does Huxley; for every character of loose morals achieves no good, and is usually depicted as very unhappy. To many Catholics, sexual unrestraint is a cause of much of the present moral decadence; to Huxley it seems the same. Realizing the importance of conserving energy, Huxley offers the following view as a help to achieving the ends which he sets up in *Ends and Means*; "...The energy created by sexual restraint is the motive power which makes it possible for us to conceive these desirable ends and to think out the means for realizing them."

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17 Chastity, though not generally a religious matter, has a religious implication among Catholics. It is mentioned here to show Huxley's ideas on morality. cf. *Ends and Means*, p. 365

18 *ibid.*, p. 369
The relation of sex to religion is obvious.
For the Catholic, sexuality accounts for the majority of sins, particularly since for Catholics sexual relations among married persons only are licit. Extra-maritally, sexual relations are never allowed or sanctioned by the Catholic Church. For Huxley, however, sexual relations do not have such limits. He believes that sex should be curbed only insofar as it promotes a state of non-attachment. In this matter there is a decided difference of view between Huxley and the Catholic.

To a faith that looks for a spiritual solution to ailments, prayer is essential. Recognizing a Supreme Being, Catholics feel that prayer establishes the desired love and devotion between God and creature. Moreover, since direct contact between the spiritual and material is impossible, Catholics seek communication through prayer, and it stands to reason that such a form of communication is necessary to express devotion.

It may be said further, that Catholics use prayer as a medium of asking God for favors in addition to giving thanks for favors granted. Besides God, saints are also the supposed recipients of prayerful devotion. Now, since prayer requires emotional feeling, Huxley does not sanction it, for he feels that emotional outbursts of any form should be avoided. In addition to
his objection on the grounds of emotional claptrap, he regards prayer as a form of idolatry, especially prayers to saints. To the Catholic, however, emotional feeling as expressed to the saints in the form of prayer, merely expresses veneration rather than idolatry.

Huxley believes animals more sensible than men in that the former recognize the inanity of prayer. Animals, he believes have more sense than to pray to a clouded sky for rain. However, here again is Huxley's objection to Catholic Faith, for Catholics pray to a God in whom they believe, not to a sky. Huxley prefers to know for certain the existence of such a God.

Besides opposing prayer on the foregoing grounds, Huxley objects to the projection of self which prayer entails. The prayer of contrition best exemplifies this, wherein Catholics ask forgiveness for spiritual offenses committed. Naturally, in such a prayer projection of the self is necessary, for it is the self that asks forgiveness. Huxley, considering contrition as a license to commit sin, looks upon it as provocative of hypocrisy. However, it may be said that his whole objection to prayer of any form rests on his conviction that worship of an extra-mundane God is insane. Now to look to his ideas on sin.
To the Catholic more than to any other religious person, the concept of sin means a great deal. In fact, since Catholics accept revelation, they believe Christ gave the power of forgiving sins to his apostles, a power that has been handed down through the centuries. Hence the notion of confession entails consideration of sin. Christianity concerns itself with evil in that it displeases God, but the Catholic concerns himself with forgiveness of evil as well as with the fact that it displeases God. The avoidance of sin gives rise to asceticism, a practice which Huxley decidedly opposes. Hence, to him the concept of sin has little implication, except insofar as such a concept can determine the main evils of humanity: "Using the language of theology," he says, "one can say that the deadly sins to which we are peculiarly attached are pride, avarice and malice."

Huxley's idea of sin is particularly brought out in *Ends and Means* where he refers to St. Peter's administration to the galley slaves whom the saint admonishes to think of their sins. Huxley, profound humanitarian, considers such admonishment ironic in the light of the slaves' suffering predicament. In like manner, he

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20 *Ends and Means*, p. 23
21 *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan*, p. 108
believes many people woefully treated in this world, people who themselves "sin" little. Basically, it may be said that Huxley's objection to the concept of sin comes from his distaste for anything that condones hypocrisy, however repentent the offender may be, and the Catholic concept of sin, including sacramental belief in Penance, seems to admit such condonement.

Huxley has more approval of the Catholic concept of meditation than of any other Catholic idea. His basis for approving that concept lies in his latest theory of salvation for mankind, a theory wherein meditation is one of the means of attaining non-attachment. He feels, however, that the fruits of Catholic meditation decay because of the selfish motives arising from Catholic mysticism. Huxley ardently believes any tree is known by its fruits (a phrase used continually in *Ends and Means*), and decadent society, largely Catholic, is rather sour fruit. Indeed, the society produced by conventional religion, decadent as it is, prompts his desire for a change in creed. At on'time, Christianity intended

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His treatment of non-attachment in *Ends and Means* emphasizes the use of meditation as a means to achieving such detachment.
to elevate humanity, but Huxley feels that it has failed woefully.

However much Huxley disapproves of Catholicism, he nevertheless adopts many of its notions. For example, his idea of non-attachment entails consideration of charity, chastity, obedience and morality, and, above all, mysticism. Also, he admits the existence of good and evil, actually believing certain "sins" detrimental to social welfare. Above all, he detests promiscuity, and is thereby at one with Catholicism. Seemingly, if Huxley could bring himself to accept the notion of an extra-mundane Deity, he would fit Catholic notions precisely. Of course, in his denial of revelation he is decidedly un-Catholic.

In the acceptance of Divine Revelation, Catholics express their faith, for it requires faith to accept the words of the Bible as absolute truth. Now, Huxley, laying the emphasis on reason that he does, is not prone to accept faith as an ultimate test of truth. Hence, he does not approve of the Catholic insistence on the importance of faith over reason.

\[\text{E} \text{nds and Means, p. 328}\]
Not only in matters of revelation is the faith of Catholics attested, but in practically every phase of the religion they call upon faith for absolute conviction. In fact, the Mass, or the Consecration, which makes up the essence of Catholic faith, requires faith in order to be accepted. Again, prayer, asceticism, meditation, belief in the Sacraments and Catholic charity demand faith as their basis, a faith in a God not visibly present. And, though Huxley objects to professing faith in entities not visible, nevertheless, he realizes that final conviction in many matters can come only after an act of faith.

Before leaving Huxley's notions of Catholicism, one should make some mention of his thoughts concerning Pascal, one of the more noted luminaries of the Roman church. Throughout his writings Huxley makes continual reference to Pascal and his beliefs, displaying a profound if not admirable interest in him. Of all the Church dignitaries, none is quite so persuasive as Pascal, even Huxley admitting the forceful effect of the former's style in writing.

Actually, Huxley's main objection to Pascal rests in the fact that the latter preferred a life of spiritual aspirations to worship of life. Now it is evident
that anyone opposing Huxley's primary solution to society's ills is bound to meet with his objection. This primary solution is based on full recognition of life, contrary to Pascalian asceticism. Convinced that Christianity was the only solution to man's ills, Pascal attempted to convert everyone to such a belief. An example of such an attempt by Pascal is seen in the following words taken from a special treatise on Pascal by Huxley: "...Christianity, he (Pascal) concludes, is the only religion which will cure men of living. Therefore all men must become Christians. Pascal expended all his extraordinary powers in trying, by persuasion, by argument, to convert his fellows to consistent death-worship."

To Huxley, any Catholic devotion to the spiritual to the exclusion of the material may be interpreted as death-worship, for there is an abandonment of life and an embracing of death wrapped up in any completely spiritual life.

Again, Huxley feels that Pascal aspired to be more than just a man, and Huxley bases his belief in this regard on Pascal's disinclination for anything normally considered pleasant. For example, Pascal,
devoted as he was to "living in God," failed even to see love in the light of natural instinct. Consequently, Huxley believes that Pascal sought to be an angel rather than a man. Pascal, exception as he was to the general run of Catholics, sought perfection in worldly detachment, frequently resorting to extremely ascetical practices.

A second notion which Huxley considers rather absurd in Pascal was the latter’s tendency to look upon sickness as a beneficial state, or a position wherein man can realize his ultimate aims with more facility. Humanitarian that Huxley is, he can find no condemnation for anyone who worships death and sickness. In such a view, he finds that same emphasis on the self which he persistently denounces.

Now Pascal, death-worshipper that he is, abides by a definite code of morality, seeking justification for any moral actions. That is, chastity, asceticism and other practices find their sanction in the moral code to which Pascal adheres. That, again, to Huxley is an absurdity, feeling as he does, that moral codes are fictitious, entirely without the basis which man attributes to them. In this connection, he says,

For morality is always the product of terror; its chains and strait-waistcoats are fashioned by those who dare not trust others, because they

23 By "living in God" is meant partaking of the mystical union with Him, commonly referred to by Catholics as the Mystical Body. Pascal had much faith in such living.
dare not trust themselves, to walk in liberty... they do their best to repress all impulses and desires which cannot be fitted into their scheme of moral behaviour. With what deplorable results.

Consistently enough, Huxley sees no stable code of morality, for non-attachment is based on diversity.

Typical of extreme Catholic asceticism is the holiness accompanying it, i.e., Pascal remained true to his beliefs and led a holy life. In leading such a life, Pascal denounces those worshipping life among whom Huxley is outstanding. Judging Pascal on mutable standards of morality, Huxley says: "Pascal, it is obvious, was a horribly immoral man. He sinned against life by a consistent excess of holiness, in precisely the same way as gluttons sin by consistent excess of greed..."

On the whole, Pascal is the extreme in Catholic asceticism. Actually, he carries Huxley's New Humanism to the exact opposite, seeking, it is true, a spiritual level, but one entirely different from Huxley's idea of it. However, the difference between the two lies, as it does between Catholics and Huxley, in belief. Pascal, believing in an extra-mundane God,
lived his life according to his belief, which is just what Huxley does, only Huxley finds his God entirely within life itself.

Huxley does not openly concern himself with essential Catholic ideas such as Mass, Confession, Indulgences, Sacraments, miracles and other details of Catholic practice. One looks in vain for comment by Huxley regarding Consecration of the Mass, yet Consecration is the most important belief for the Catholic. In his criticism of Catholicism, Huxley again demonstrates that he criticizes only religious ideas which he feels are detrimental to successful living.

In concluding Huxley's notion of Catholicism, one can say that though there is much about the Roman creed of which he disapproves, there are also many features about it which he believes satisfactory to humanity. In his latest books he seems to be taking a step toward Catholic notions, especially in his emphasis on the spiritual. In *Ends and Means*, however, Catholicism is the object of severe criticism, more because of its emphasis on the self.

Huxley, realist that he is, does not believe
Catholicism utterly lacking in qualities respecting reality. In fact, he has never written more favor able lines concerning Catholicism than one sees in

*Frontier Studies:*

The recent enormous growth of Catholicism in countries hitherto predominantly Protestant, such as America, England, Germany, and Holland, surprises and alarms some observers. I will not affirm that the phenomenon is not alarming; but that anyone possessing the slightest knowledge of human nature should find it surprising is the fact which in its turn surprises me.

Catholicism is probably the most realistic of all Western religions. Its practice is based on a profound knowledge of human nature in all its varieties and gradations. From the fetish worshipper to the metaphysician, from the tired business man to the mystic, from the sentimentalist to the intellectual, every type of human being can find in Catholicism the spiritual nourishment which he or she requires...The only people for whom it does not cater are those possessed by that rare, dangerous and uneasy passion, the passion for liberty.
CHAPTER IV

Huxley's Ideas on the Moral Practices
Based on Materialism and Spiritualism

The ethical conduct of a person who believes in an after life is based on a desire to enjoy happiness in that after life. For the thorough-going materialist, who does not believe in an after life, ethical conduct is based upon a desire to enjoy happiness in this life. The materialist sets up his own standards of good and evil, standards which help in the attainment of material success and happiness. The materialist prefers self interests over the interests of others, and it is this love of self that Huxley denounces:

But men cannot realize their unity with others and with ultimate reality unless they practice the virtue of love and understanding. Love, compassion and understanding or intelligence—these are the primary virtues in the ethical system.¹

Typical materialists in Huxley's novels are Stoyte in After Many a Summer Dies the Swan and Lucy Tantamount in Point Counter Point. Stoyte, wealthy capitalist, seeks happiness based on the enjoyment of sexual

¹ Ends and Means, p. 348
pleasures, material success and a strong desire to live in this material world forever. Lucy Tantsamount seeks the same type of gratification, and lives for the enjoyment of the moment. Huxley despises and satirizes both of these characters because they do nothing to promote the welfare of society. Huxley clinches his hatred of materialism in *Ends and Means* with his opinion that social welfare cannot be attained unless personal ideas of material success are eliminated.

Huxley was not always adverse to materialistic notions; for at one time (1926) he had the following to say regarding a materialistic outlook:

> It is for its 'materialism' that our western civilization is generally blamed. Wrongly, I think, for materialism—if materialism means a preoccupation with the actual world in which we live—is something wholly admirable...we are not materialistic enough; that is the trouble.\(^2\)

However, the important point is that Huxley countenances materialism as it involves preoccupation with the actual world. He makes the distinction, lest he be thought to agree with the extreme ethical beliefs of the materialist. In 1937 Huxley sees the fruits of

\(^2\)*Ends and Means*, p. 347

\(^3\)*Jesting Pilate*, p. 129
materialism as a distinct evil. He expresses his opinion in an article attacking society's preference for cheap "pulp" magazines over a thorough search for truth and humanitarian charity. He feels that society has come to worship itself and its nation as idols of perfection. In the light of his latest book, *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan*, it is clear that Huxley prefers that humanity raise itself from material pleasures to a spiritual level, a level where charity and love will predominate. In answering a question concerning where good may be found, Fropper replies, "...on the level of the spirit...On the higher level...it exists as the experience of eternity."

The spiritualist, disregarding the material, is unaware of the universe and its problems. Hence, the spiritualist does not have as rash a code of ethics as the materialist, but Huxley does not approve of the lethargic ideas of the spiritualist which keep him almost wholly inactive. Huxley believes the cause of India's misfortune is her insane spirituality:

To my mind 'spirituality' (ultimately, I suppose, the product of the climate) is the primal curse of India and the cause of all her misfortunes.

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4 "Pulp", *Saturday Review of Lit.*, v. 16 (July 17, 1937) p. 11
5 *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan*, p. 136
it is this preoccupation with 'spiritual' realities, different from the actual historical realities of common life, that has kept millions upon millions of men and women content, through centuries, with a lot unworthy of human beings.¹

Though Huxley disapproves of the practices and results of materialistic and spiritualistic beliefs, he does not go to the other extreme and favor the notion of acting according to one's desire for happiness, in another world. In 1926 Huxley spoke his theory regarding another world, and he has maintained the same idea essentially throughout the years:

The Other world—the world of metaphysics and religion—can never possibly be as interesting as this world, and for an obvious reason. The Other world is an invention of the human fancy, and shares the limitations of its creator.⁷

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¹ Jesting Pilate, p. 128
⁷ ibid., p. 130
CHAPTER V

Special Features About Huxley's Creed

Fundamental to Huxley's creed is the belief that the condition of humanity is not hopeless. He believes that good can be attained, but that humanity must exert itself in order to attain that good:

...If men continue to be like what they are now and have been in the past, it's obvious that the world they live in can't become better. If you imagine it can, you're wildly optimistic about human nature. But on the other hand you're wildly pessimistic if you imagine that men and women are condemned by their nature to pass their whole lives on the strictly human level. Thank God, they're not. They have it in their power to climb out and up, on to the level of eternity... And that's also why one should be profoundly optimistic about the thing they're so pessimistic about that they don't even know it exists—I mean the possibility of transforming and transcending human nature...by the use of properly directed intelligence and good will.¹

Optimism is certainly not lacking in the above words which Huxley speaks through the instrument of Proter in *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan*. The important fact to be noted in the above statement is the emphasis which Huxley places in the use of intelligence and good will. His religious tenets all revert to emphasis on the use of intelligence over feeling.

¹ *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan*, pp. 278-9
Huxley regards humanity as being in a deplorable condition, suffering from greed, selfishness, hatred, inequality, hypocrisy and extreme materialism, and he believes the only remedy is for humanity to attempt to eliminate selfish desire and attachment to corruptible pleasures. His philosophy is undoubtedly humanistic, but it is a New Humanism, a social creed which ridiculesthe efforts of early so-called "Humanists," those who believed happiness attainable on the selfish human levels which Huxley considers unproductive of happiness:

Drivel, early twentieth century humanism seasoned with nineteenth-century evangelicism. What a combination. Humanism affirms that good can be achieved on a level where it doesn't exist and denies the fact of eternity. Evangelicism denies the relationship between causes and effects by affirming the existence of a personal deity who forgives offences. They're like Jack Spratt and his wife; between the two of them, they lick the platter clean of all sense whatsoever.2

Huxley is definitely opposed to the belief that good can flow from the doctrines of the so-called humanists and he has the following advice to offer for those who would insist that good may be found without necessarily changing our status:

well, if they human beings want fresh varieties of evil, let them go on with what they're doing now. But if they want good, they'll have to change their

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2 After Many a Summer Dies the Swan, pp. 135-6
tactics. And the encouraging thing is that there are tactics which will produce good. We've seen that there's nothing to be done on the strictly human level—or rather there are millions of things to be done, only none of them will achieve any good. But there is something effective to be done on the levels where good actually exists. 3

And when asked what the levels of good are, Huxley, through Propter, gives the answer:

On the level below the human and on the level above. On the animal level and on the level—well, you can take your choice of names; on the level of eternity; the level, if you don't object, of God; the level of the spirit—only that happens to be the most ambiguous word in the language. 4

On the animal level, good consists of response to the laws of one's own being, whereas on the spiritual level good consists of knowledge of psychological facts, minus all selfish awareness of time and individual craving. Huxley believes human beings often have the will to reach such a level:

Fortunately, most of us are incapable of consistency. The animal is always trying to resume its rights. And to some people, fairly frequently, perhaps occasionally to all, there come little flashes of illumination—momentary glimpses into the nature of the world as it is for a consciousness liberated from appetite and time, of the

3 After Many a Summer Dies the Swan, pp. 135–6
4 ibid., pp. 135–6
world as it might be if we didn't choose to deny
God by being our personal selves. 5  

Hence, it is clear that Huxley's creed indicates that
humans need not only according to their natural
dictates.

It must be admitted that Huxley's notions of
transcendence and means of attaining the spiritual
or animal levels are not crystal clear. Even in his
latest book, After Many a Summer Dies the Swan, Propter
admits that a certain vagueness surrounds the under-
standing of the proper course of action for humanity
to take in aiding itself. Speaking of the solution
to society's ills, Propter says: "That's what we've
got to discover. The main lines are clear enough.
But there's still a lot of work to be done on the
practical details." Eventually Huxley may work out
these details.

Huxley's creed is one of action. He does not
believe merely in society's perusal of his tenets
for the purpose of deriving some food for thought.
Although Huxley has not yet worked out the lines of
his creed completely, there is no doubt about his
rejection of selfish interests and attachment to inane

5 After Many a Summer Dies the Swan, pp. 136-7
6 Ibid., p. 129
pleasures as the first step of action to be taken.
In fact, Huxley denounces the lethargic attitudes of society as one of the main ills of that society. He clearly states that good cannot be achieved merely by musing over what should be done:

"...But unfortunately there is a way between the horns. The practical way. You can go and find out what it means for yourself, by first-hand experience. Just as you can find out what El Greco's Crucifixion of St. Peter looks like by taking the elevator and going up to the hall. Only in this case, I'm afraid, there isn't any elevator. You have to go up on your own legs. And make no mistake...! 'there's an awful lot of stairs.'"

Here Propter reveals Huxley's insistence on action.

It is possible to trace throughout Huxley's writings his emphasis on action. In fact, his satire on well-meaning individuals such as Martha of The Claxtons springs from the fact that such characters think of achieving good, but they never get around to actually doing good. Good must be worked out by the individual, and not merely viewed objectively. When Jeremy (After Many a Summer Dies the Swan ) objects to Propter's theory of timeless good, Propter replies, "You've read descriptions of timeless good, dozens of them... in all literatures of philosophy and religion. You've

-ibid-, p. 189
read them; but you've never bought your ticket for Athens." Huxley's creed is not merely theoretical; it must be practiced. Again, when asked why anyone should bother to seek the level of eternity, Propter says that it is worth the bother to attempt to conform to facts, and psychological eternity is a fact.

It has been shown that Huxley believes one's ideas of God are subjectively valid, for he believes truth is something internal, and that ideas are a good test of truth. This idealism is also fundamental to Huxley's creed, and one of the most important tenets.

The outstanding feature about Huxley's creed is the emphasis which he places on the unification of humanity. That, precisely, is the ultimate aim of his creed—the attainment of that unification. Believing that there is decidedly a split society, one which favors some while it mistreats others, Huxley offers his religious thoughts to re-unite society. Huxley has always maintained equality, even revealing his emphasis on it in his earliest writings, but particularly in *Eyeless in Gaza*. Through the person of Anthony Beavis, a character sketched by Huxley with

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3 After Many a Summer Dies the Swan, p. 119
9 ibid., pp. 133-6
enlightening purpose, Huxley conveys the following belief, a creed which he has never abandoned:

 Evil is the accentuation of division; good, whatever makes for unity with other lives and other beings...10

Huxley sees the necessity of society working together as a unit before good can be achieved.

In looking back beyond 1936 one finds in Huxley's works the seeds of his non-attachment concept. Crome Yellow, Antic Hay, Point Counter Point, and Eyeless in Gaza especially indicate his disapproval of humanity's attachment to emotional vain-glory. Skeptical of a society whose sole aim is selfish pleasure, Huxley shows that he would prefer to find a better creed, one more suited to humanity's needs. For example, as Denis in Crome Yellow, Gumbril Jr. in Antic Hay, Quarles in Point Counter Point and Anthony in Eyeless in Gaza, Huxley registers disapproval of a society bound for no good. It may be said that Anthony Beavis in Eyeless in Gaza is the first to reveal positive notions of non-attachment. Stressing that all worlds should be enjoyed, especially the present one, Anthony finally arrives at the concept of unity. That is, he discovers that the key to happiness lies in unified fellowship as opposed

10 Eyeless in Gaza, p. 488
11 ibid., p. 89
to individual separateness. The latter view dimmed by personal desires and selfishness, should be avoided.

Again, earlier, Philip Quarles in Point Counter Point objects to self-glorifying conventional religions and attachment to sensual pleasures. For example, satirizing hypocritical Burlap and Carling, Huxley expresses his feelings regarding conventional religions. Again, in his satire of Lucy Tantamount, who represents those devoted to sensual pleasure, he indicates a hatred for paganistic attachment. Beyond satire, however, there is little positive explanation of non-attachment in these books. The seeds are there, it is true, but the concept never attains full growth until

**Ends and Means:**

It is difficult to find a single word that will adequately describe the ideal man of the free philosophers and the founders of religions. 'Non-attached' is perhaps the best. The ideal man is the non-attached man. Non-attached to his bodily sensations and lusts. Non-attached to his craving for power and possessions. Non-attached to the objects of these various desires. Non-attached to his anger and hatred; non-attached to his exclusive loves. Non-attached to wealth, fame and social position. Non-attached even to science, art, speculation, philanthropy.¹²

Huxley also, as a founder of a creed, prefers a non-attachment which eliminates self-glory.

¹² *Ends and Means*, p. 4
Huxley insists that this concept of non-attachment is not new. And he sees a definite similarity between his and the Christian concept of non-attachment: "...The Gospel of Jesus is essentially a gospel of non-attachment to the 'things of this world,' and of attachment to God...there has been no lack of Christian philosophers to reaffirm the ideal of non-attachment." Huxley and the Christian have, however, different ideas on how this non-attachment is to be attained. Moreover, he believes the ethic of non-attachment to be an established doctrine of different cosmologies. "...the ethic of non-attachment," he states, "has always been correlated with cosmologies that affirm the existence of a spiritual reality underlying the phenomenal world and imparting to it whatever value or significance it possesses." Hence, cosmologies agree with him on the concept of non-attachment.

Lest there be any doubt as to the positiveness of Huxley's concept of non-attachment, the following statement taken from *Ends and Means* should clarify his meaning:

Non-attachment is negative only in name. The practice of non-attachment entails the practice of all the virtues. It entails the practice of

13 *Ends and Means*, pp. 5-6
14 Ibid., pp. 4-5
charity, for example: for there are no more fatal impediments than anger (even 'righteous indignation') and cold-blooded malice to the identification of the self with the immanent and transcendent more-than-self. It entails the practice of generosity and disinterestedness; for avarice and love of possessions constrain their victims to equate themselves with mere things...non-attachment imposes upon those who would practise it the adoption of an intensely positive attitude towards the world. 15

Charity is the most important practice of the sincerely non-attached person, though the other virtues are also essential. And insofar as monotheism promotes charity it is desirable. On the other hand, insofar as it promotes or encourages selfish interests peculiar to conventional faith, it is undesirable. Huxley's eclectic creed is decidedly pragmatic.

Huxley has a definite program for humanity to follow in attaining the unity of welfare necessary to achieve good, or happiness. There are three means of attaining this good: (1) pre-nuptial chastity; (2) authoritative education; (3) the establishment of equality between men and women. The last two of these means are clear enough in helping to achieve good. Huxley's emphasis on chastity follows from his emphasis on the benefits of having energy built up by sexual restraint.

Huxley realizes that humanity needs energy to build up common action promoting common welfare, and he sees sexual restraint as the key to the attainment of that

15 loc. cit.
17 Ends and Means, p. 368
energy. If such energy can be directed down the proper channels the attainment of good will follow. In his emphasis on chastity it would seem that Huxley has a definite standard of morality on which his tenets are founded. That is true, but Huxley's standards of morality are by no means fixed. That is, he conceives of an action being good or evil only insofar as it helps the individual to achieve the good of humanity as a whole. Huxley believes firmly in a program of physical education as a help to attaining the welfare of all; for he regards a sound body and a sound mind as helpful levers on which to swing a program intended to achieve good for everyone.

By way of summary, one may say Huxley's creed consists of varied tenets, all of which he considers productive of human liberty and good-will. His is essentially a doctrine that springs from the woeful condition of humanity, wherein inequality and oppression dominate. Laying the blame onto selfishness and passive acceptance of machinery, and modern religious dogmas which promote hypocrisy and deny reality, Huxley sees a distinct conflict between reason and passion, a discord which inevitably brings suffering, war, and annihilation. As a solution to such discord, he admonishes, above all, an escape or non-attachment from personal emotions.

18 \* *\*
Ends and Means, p. 369

19 Ibid., pp. 364-6
desires and awareness of time. One must rise up from
the human level to a spiritual level, or descend to an
animal level, depending on which is more easy to attain
for the individual. For Huxley, good may be found on
either of these two levels, and there alone. The human
level promotes only unhappiness. As a means to attain-
ing non-attachment, Huxley advises a group meditation,
modeled much after the Yogi, Hindu and Christian mystics,
and somewhat similar to Miller's philosophy of Eyeless
In Gaza, an eclectic creed. Again, sexual restraint is
looked upon to create the energy necessary to attain
the level of eternity, or non-attachment, a restraint
to be made compulsory through laws affecting chastity
especially pre-nuptual chastity. His creed does not
oppose conventional creeds decidedly monotheistic, and
in that respect he has modified earlier polytheistic
views. However, unlike conventional religion, Huxley's
creed does not look to another world for salvation,
but seeks resolution of ills entirely within this sphere,
His God is Life, unified Life as it is; at first poly-
theistic, it is now also monotheistic. Admitting the
truth of psychological states, Huxley's creed is toler-

ant enough to admit God may be one or many depending on
how the individual views him, anything, in fact, except
an idol such as the state or other power. Believing the solidity of humanity as the most important achievement, Huxley's creed accepts any standards of morality or beliefs that promote non-attachment, and rejects any that do not. His idea of liberal unification is best expressed in *Texts and Pretexts* as living out "personal separateness in the all... a fellowship with essence." Finally, Huxley's pragmatic creed is most adequately explained in his own words defining religion, a definition to which his belief conforms. The welfare of society is his aim, and escape from selfish interests the desirable achievement. In any event, his creed has universal appeal, particularly because of its pragmatic nature.

*Texts and Pretexts,* p. 40
CHAPTER VI

Huxley's Search for Truth

Huxley's religious ideas have a definite bearing on his search for Truth, and his criticism of religious tenets aims primarily at finding Truth. Certainly, his aim is not unmotivated rejection of political, sociological and religious beliefs. Furthermore, Huxley does not feel that Truth is to be found in arriving at a single cause for society's ills:

"We shall never succeed in changing our age of iron into an age of gold until we give up our ambitions to find a single cause for all our ills, and admit the existence of many causes acting simultaneously, of intricate correlations and reduplicated actions and reactions."

He believes that Truth should be sought by thoroughly examining the many causes of evil in the world.

In discovering the reason for Huxley's deep concern over Truth one finds an adequate explanation in his own words:

"To accept the essential sadness and painfulness of human life is not, of course, to resign oneself to the order of things. To say 'whatever is, is right' is simply not true; much that is, is wrong, and it is our duty to change it. In working for these changes we shall incidentally find happiness; and when they have been accomplished others will be in a better position to live good lives and so, incidentally, to be happy in their turn."

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1 Ends and Means, p. 16
2 "The Problem of Faith", op. cit., p. 215
Hence, Huxley's search for Truth is not just a whim of his, rather he feels that it is his duty to attempt to find it.

It is important that Huxley, in searching for Truth, is not merely trying to satisfy his own curiosity, but rather he has the welfare of society at heart, and it is his sincere hope that Truth, when found, will bring about the happiness for which erratic society is constantly seeking, but as yet has failed to find. Huxley is certainly not to be condemned because of his thoughts and ideas on modern standards and ideals, for those ideas flow from Huxley's own personal convictions arrived at in his search for Truth. Huxley is not a blind iconoclast, but rather definitely a constructivist.

Ever since Huxley started his writing career he has concerned himself with Truth and its attainability. In fact, he has concerned himself with science, politics, education, recreation and above all else, religion, in his attempt to find justification for society's status. Little by little, however, Huxley concentrated his search for Truth in the field of religions, until finally, with the appearance of *Ends and Means* and *After Many a

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*Ends and Means*, p. 217
Summer Dies the Saan he delineates himself as definitely a religious figure. In this latter book, particularly, Huxley's comments through the person of Propter are almost entirely pertinent to religious concepts. Ends and Means, though it deals with Huxley's investigation of many means, basically looks to a religious means for the achievement of the desired end of his search for Truth. Hence, his search for Truth carries him primarily into theological fields.

There seems to be little question that Huxley during his first years of writing is agnostical, an attitude perhaps inherited from his biologist grandfather, T. H. Huxley and his uncle through marriage, Matthew Arnold. In any event, his agnosticism is by no means lethargically posited to the point where query is lacking. Though he withholds definite religious comment in his early novels such as Crome Yellow, nevertheless, as Denis in the book, Huxley conveys to the reader a sense of investigation, a feeling of undesirable ignorance about the why and wherefore of things. The same is true of Eyeless in Gaza, Antic Hay and These Barren Leaves, all of which single out some one character who expresses futility and skepticism with the present order and a sense of groping for some better answer. All through
these fictional tales, Huxley rejects or puts his satirical brand on characters who represent blatant hypocrisy or conventional passivity. From a religious angle, Mr. Bodhibam in *Crome Yellow* strikes the reader as a highly imaginative custodian of society's welfare whose religious pills are repugnantly indigestible. Again, in *Point Counter Point*, Huxley reaches the end of his tale still undecided about Truth, still unconvinced of the present order. In this latter book, he indicates that a philosophy similar to that of D. H. Lawrence might possibly offer some answer to his query, but in later works he indicates a change of opinion. Actually, at no time does Huxley fall into the materialistic limitations of Lawrence's concepts. In fact, he seems to take just the opposite stand in *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan*, a novel given to extolling a virtuous life modeled after Propter, its chief protagonist.

In tracing the growth of Huxley's search for Truth I should comment on *Eyeless in Gaza*, one of the outstanding examples of his searching for Truth. In this book Huxley in the person of Anthony Beavis displays a definitely religious attitude as well as a distinct movement toward his goal. The story portrays Anthony Beavis at

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3 *Crome Yellow*, p. 78. In Mr. Bodhibam's allegorical sermonizing it is evident that his interpretation of life's phenomena fails to meet with Huxley's approval.

4 The book ends with Burlap and Gladys playing together in a bathtub, a decidedly ironic thrust at a jazz-society
different stages in his life and shows him to be a character in constant search of the true source of happiness. Resolute and determined, Anthony refuses to give way to the conventional emotions such as love, hoping to find satisfaction in solitude. In a trip that takes him around the country and into Mexico, Anthony meets one Mr. Miller whose philosophy is a composite of Hinduism, Christianity and "Millerism," and he is affected by Miller to the extent that finally he decides that the happy life consists of unification with society, instead of solitude. At this stage, apparently Huxley formulated his idea of detachment involving participation in humanity's unity and this belief forms the basis of his present creed. In *Eyeless in Gaza* much of the bitter pessimism of earlier writings (such as *Crome Yellow*) is missing. There seems to be a deep concern with finding out, positively, the cause of discontent and misunderstanding such as Huxley until that time experienced. Moreover, one feels that Huxley as Anthony is making a sincere search for Truth, unbiased by inherited prejudices. Furthermore, since the appearance of *Eyeless in Gaza*, his books seem to express Huxley himself did extensive travelling, and even spent time in the scene where Anthony Beavis changes his ideas. It seems certain that Anthony is Huxley.
that same quiet yet intensive sense, a spirit aided, perhaps, by the fact that Huxley realizes in what Truth consists; namely, in the detachment from human caprices and elevation to the level of eternity as expressed by Propter, a level of unified charity.

In *Point Counter Point*, Huxley as Philip Quarles searches for Truth in a society given to licentious enjoyment of a scientific and jazz-mad era. Naturally enough, his religious discoveries do not take the form of hopeful suggestions, but rather negative invectives, skeptical satirical thrusts at hypocrisy and dissoluteness, all of which aid in discrediting conventional standards of action.

Of his essays displaying the search for Truth, perhaps none is more significant (especially in its title) than *Jesting Pilate*. Primarily a book of travel, it serves as a medium of expressing Huxley's many comments on conventionally religious groups with which he comes in contact. He evidently attempts to build up his notions of Indian and Western creeds. It is in this book that Huxley establishes himself as a critic of life, as an investigator of people, a person on the fence of

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The title is taken from Bacon's essay on "Truth." "What is Truth?" said *Jesting Pilate*, and would not stay for an answer." Huxley may perhaps be carrying over Bacon's implication that Pilate and others are jesters because they don't actually seek Truth.
the cosmos, looking down and passing judgment on what he sees.

In Texts and Pretexts Huxley comments on various passages taken from different writers and different subjects. Outstanding in this treatment of his quest for Truth is his passage regarding his view of life and religion, opinions he arrives at after careful scrutiny of humanity. Truth, for him consists of the use of reason. He is imitative somewhat of Whitman's idea:

If we would avoid the fenny bogs and thorny brakes, we must imitate the self-denying Whitman and refrain from arbitrary rationalizations and headlong rushes into logical conclusions. Or if we must play the theological game, let us never forget that it is a game. Religion, it seems to me, can survive only as a consciously accepted system of make-believe. People will accept certain theological statements about life and the world, will elect to perform certain rites and to follow certain rules of conduct, not because they imagine the statements to be true or the rules and rites to be divinely dictated, but simply because they have discovered that—to live under certain ethical restraints, and as if certain metaphysical doctrines were true, is to live nobly, with style...The great test, the most important of the arts is living.

Hence, it is quite obvious that Huxley, in his search for Truth, assumes that emotional religion is only a game, not nearly so important as life, a view which explains the unimportance of modern religion in his basic creed.

Though devoted mostly to travel descriptions, occasionally the book makes reference to religion also.

Texts and Pretexts, p. 319
Of his magazine essays, "One God or Many?" seems to be the most expansive of his search for Truth. There is, however, a volume of essays entitled *Proper Studies* which deals with the study of man and the consequent search for Truth. The latter, written two years before the financial depression, investigates the various artificial substitutes for religion, finally concluding that Truth is not to be found in the decay of western religions. Again, it is in this latter collection of essays that Huxley indicates a distaste for all the modern substitutes for religion, such as business, art, politics, sex, priest surrogates and superstition. Dissatisfied with superficial roads to Truth, he seeks a firmer and more concrete path, one individualistic in choice, yet charitable in aim.

By the time *Eins and Means* appears, Huxley has established positive notions of Truth, though by no means has he arrived at a point where inquiry is suspended. Constantly searching for true answers to multiple problems, he never for a moment gives up the search. And despite indications of his arrival at an

9 *of* *Harper's Monthly*, vol. 159 (Sept. 1929), p. 400

10 The title is taken from a line from Alexander Pope: "The proper study of mankind is man."

understanding of that in which Truth consists, nevertheless he feels that he is far from understanding the what and why of the universe. In fact, the eclectic opinions of Ends and Means verify his willingness to accept concepts which further his grasp of Truth.

In After Many a Summer Dies the Swan Huxley is continuing his search, hoping above all to further his grasp of Truth. Propter, it is true, realizes that it is useless to seek Truth on the human level, the level whereon only evil exists, but he does realize that the level of non-attachment, the level of spiritual transcendence from time and craving, affords Truth and goodness for mankind. The only problem impeding Huxley's full grasp of the concept of Truth is that of the means of motivating humanity into elevating themselves to the level of eternity about which Propter speaks. Consequently, Huxley, in his current investigation of religion, still continues his search for Truth, convinced that conventional society does not enlighten or satisfy his quest to any appreciable extent.

Truth consists of many things for many people, yet it is an enigma to nearly all. Pilate's question defies

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12 The means and the end expressed in the book of that name indicates that he somewhat grasps the notion of Truth for which he so long sought. Propter also seems to have a concept of Truth—spiritual transcendence and charity.

13 After Many a Summer Dies the Swan, p. 123
human reply, for the answer seems to lie outside the investigations of science, Metaphysics or Cosmology. Never quite satisfied with reason's explanation of Truth, most conventional creeds resort to faith for an answer, or, if not an answer, at least consolation. There are many modern Becons, but like him they arrive only at an individual interpretation of Truth. In fact, there are two distinct epistemological schools, commonly referred to as the Realists and the Idealists. The former maintains that Truth is objective, i.e., outside the mind and true in itself, whereas, the latter school, the idealists, maintain that Truth is in the mind in the form of an idea, and there only. In other words, the world is illusory and only ideas exist. Huxley, of course takes good points from both schools.

For example, Huxley emphasizes the existence of the real world, never denying cosmological phenomena for a moment. Actually, for him Life is God; hence, he hardly denies the facts of that life. He is, however, to a certain extent an idealist, particularly on the matter of Truth. For the evidence of this one may depend on his own words: "Truth is internal. One

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14 Epistemology is the science of true reasoning.
15 By Cosmological phenomena is meant actual existence of matter.
psychological fact is as good as another." Again, "In any case," he dogmatizes, "the criterion of truth and falsehood must always remain internal, psychological." In fact, Huxley's creed emphasizes individual interpretation of Truth, which, of course, will be different for individuals in the same way that God is different for them. For him, the psychological states are the test of truth, and it is on them he relies for conviction. Despite his reliance on internal states for the criterion of truth and falsehood, nevertheless, his notion that time and craving are evil is posited by Propter as an objective fact, irrespective of how the individual mind may interpret it. In that respect, at least, he is not an idealist. But in his emphasis on the "knowledge of the world" as the form of goodness he seems to be decidedly idealistic.

In any event, Huxley seeks Truth in his religious investigations, using an unbiased, sincere mind as his searchlight.

16 "One God or Many?", Harper's Monthly, (Sept., 1929) v. 159, p. 401
17 After Many a Summer Dies the Swan, p. 136
CHAPTER VII

Conclusion

During the course of this study, I have noted that the most important feature about Huxley's religious conviction, negative and positive, is his insistence that a change of creed for society is necessary. In his criticism of religions, he believes modern society should not continue in its present faith, especially since conventional religions lead only to hypocrisy and self-glorification.

Convinced that modern society is floundering in error as a result of its present religious beliefs, he offers his own creed which advises escape or detachment from the selfish human level. For him, happiness consists of spiritual contemplation transcendent above time and craving. His independent theology, which sets him off from other iconoclasts, indicates that he is directing his pen along a definitely religious vein. He is an iconoclast with a religious purpose.

The characters in his novels who supposedly represent Huxley himself substantiate the ideas expressed in his articles and essays. Hence, their ideas have been recorded herein as Huxley's ideas. Most important
of such characters are Philip Querles in *Point Counter Point* and Mr. Propter in *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan*.

From the evidence of his religious notions, it is clear that Huxley is definitely a religious figure. In his early works he shows slight interest in religion, but in the last ten years he has become a sincere humanitarian whose religious notions spring from a deep interest in society. First of all, he is thoroughly pragmatic. Definitely not an atheist, his notion of God calls for a deity existing in this material world. He believes God may be different for individuals, depending on how people choose to regard Him. Huxley has maintained this utilitarian notion of God through all the years of his writing. Although he was inclined at first to favor a polytheistic concept of God, he now seems to favor a monotheistic deity. In his denunciation of conventional creeds, Huxley is again pragmatic. His main criticism of Christianity, the dominant Occidental creed, arises from his conviction that Christianity has decayed and has made hypocrites of its adherents. He has a special abhorrence for asceticism and emotional religion, both Christian practices. Again, in taking cognizance of the numerous churches branding themselves Christian
sects, Huxley criticizes a creed which could not hold together the pattern of society. In his disinclination for Oriental creeds (though he seems to favor them above Christianity), he attacks those beliefs because they tend to kill the soul through abnegation. Again, his own creed emphasizes the necessity of detachment, or complete relinquishment of sensual pleasures and emotional responses. Firmly believing that one has a duty toward one's fellow-man, a duty of kindness and assistance, he offers his creed as a means of attaining that kindness. He does not believe that such charity can be achieved unless one is completely detached from selfish interests; hence, his creed holds up the welfare of society as its aim rather than happiness in another world. Such a belief is consistent with his pragmatic nature. He is not inclined to believe in entities which he cannot see, nor has he any inclinations for pleasures which destroy charity. Consequently, Huxley conservative as he is, cannot be classified as either a spiritualist or materialist. Finally, Huxley is continually searching for Truth, never quite satisfied that he has found it. It is true that his beliefs have not undergone essential changes in the last twenty years, nor are those beliefs likely to undergo radical changes in the remaining years of his life, yet he persistently
seeks Truth and has an open and unbiased mind for receiving it.

In taking the religious stand that he does, Huxley does not align himself with any particular sect. He is neither Christian, Hindu nor Pantheist, yet in toto he represents all of these sects. Beyond question, his creed is eclectic, and its aim the salvation of modern decadent society. Consequently, his disapproval of modern religion is not sweeping, biased nor even necessarily bitter. Tolerant by experience, Huxley believes any creed has its good points, depending on the degree to which it aids man in transcending his selfish desires and awareness of time. On the other hand, insofar as the conventional creeds promote materialism or sensuality, they must be rejected. To his mind, "a tree is known by its fruits," which is an axiom underlying all his religious convictions.

Huxley satirizes modern religion vehemently, but not without purpose. All his religious notions are directed toward prevention of social inequality and happiness for all. It is his sincere hope that this modern society, which is wallowing in deceit and selfishness, will soon forsake the mud of passivity and its descent to the Gadarenes, though he also believes that
transcendence is not likely—at least, not under the present dominance of religious belief. Regardless of how much he has been maligned, Huxley, and his religious notions, are deserving of commendation, for the man and his concepts are concerned primarily with the betterment of humanity.
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